SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1123

A Recital of Early Recordings of Music by Sir Arthur Sullivan

Issued in association with the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN (1842 - 1900) was the outstanding British composer of the nineteenth century. However, his posthumous reputation has been distorted both by the hostility of influential writers whose critical commitment was to Stanford and Parry, and by the popularity of the comic operas for which W. S. Gilbert provided the libretti. Received wisdom has it that Sullivan's non-operatic output died with him. This is not so: a study carried out by the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society of disc and cylinder recordings made during the period 1898 - 1951 has revealed over 4000 individual records of his music, of which some 40 per cent are of repertoire outside the familiar operatic canon. The present compilation is made up entirely of 78rpm discs from the period 1902 - 1924, and the balance of items as to musical genre fairly closely reflects the balance of Sullivan vocal records available during that time - incontrovertible evidence of the continuing popularity of the composer's music well into the twentieth century.

Sullivan's first great success, and the work that established his reputation, was his incidental music to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, performed at the Crystal Palace in April 1862. Sullivan, however, was not a genius of the kind that starves in a garret for the sake of an ideal; he was, like Verdi, pragmatic and professional, accepting the need to satisfy the public in return for adequate financial rewards. At first this meant a conventional career as a teacher and organist; he edited a number of operas for Boosey and entered the then extensive market for hymns and songs. 'Orpheus with his lute' (words from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*) is one of the composer' s earliest songs, written in 1863/4 and one of a group of five sold outright to the publisher Metzler for five guineas - a mistake he was not to repeat. 'How Many Hired Servants' is from the oratorio *The Prodigal Son*, first performed at the Three Choirs Festival (Worcester) in 1869, with Santley as the father and Sims Reeves as the Prodigal.

'The Sailor's Grave' (1872) and 'Thou'rt Passing Hence' (1875), the latter first sung by Santley, may be taken as representative of Sullivan' s efforts to satisfy the market for domestic ballads. 'The Sailor's Grave' was popular enough to be turned into a series of picture postcards and led Sullivan to exclaim in mock despair 'Why, oh why, did I write that terrible song?'. 'Mary Morrison' (1874), a setting of words by Burns, is what we would call an art song - one of the composer's finest.

The patter song 'My name is John Wellington Wells' appears in the third G&S operetta, *The Sorcerer* (1877). It is sung by the family sorcerer ('We practice necromancy in all its branches') as he introduces himself in the first act. Also in 1877 Sullivan provided incidental music for a production of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* mounted in Manchester by Charles Calvert. 'King Henry's Song', a lyric by Bluff King Hal himself, was interpolated into the production, and so set by

Sullivan. The ballad 'I would I were a King', the words translated from the French of Victor Hugo, appeared the following year, 1878.

The Pirates of Penzance had its première in the United States on 31 December 1879, although a token performance had been given the previous day in Paignton to establish United Kingdom copyright. The two songs here presented were then, as now, among the most popular items in the score. Sullivan's connection with the Leeds Festival, which as its conductor he raised to international standards and stature, began in 1880. His first Festival as conductor also saw the first performance of *The Martyr of Antioch*, described on the title page as 'a sacred musical drama'. Like much of Sullivan's concert music the *Martyr* is theatrical in conception, and it was successfully presented as an opera by the Car1 Rosa Opera Company in 1898. The story is based on the martyrdom of St. Margaret of Antioch in the third century. 'Come, Margarita, come' is sung by the Roman Prefect Olybius as he calls on the Christian heroine to lead pagan worship. This aria was sung at the first performance by Edward Lloyd, the present performer.

Iolanthe was first performed at the Savoy Theatre in 1882. The Sentry's Song, sung as that stolid individual stands guard over Parliament, achieved - in common with a number of the operatic items in this collection - an independent existence in the concert hall. The duet 'None Shall Part Us', sung by the lovers Phyllis and Strephon in the first act, started life in the second. *The Mikado* (1885) is generally reckoned to be Sullivan's most popular and most successful composition for the theatre, and the Mikado's song is presented here. Listeners familiar with modern productions and recordings may be surprised by the lines 'or pinches her figure/is blacked like a nigger/with permanent walnut juice'. These are the original words, but already by the 1930s they were felt to be in poor taste. A.P. Herbert was brought in to rectify Gilbert, and Herbert's version has invariably been performed since World War II.

Six years after *The Martyr of Antioch* Sullivan scored a still greater success at the Leeds Festival with *The Golden Legend* (1886). Described as a 'dramatic cantata', this work was immediately recognised as the finest British choral composition of the century. For many years it was second in popularity only to Handel' s *Messiah*, and it continued to be regularly performed until the second World War. 'The Night is Calm' is sung by the heroine, Elsie, at the climax of the third scene as she prepares to give her life to save that of Prince Henry. 'Virgin who Lovest' occurs later in the work, sung by Elsie's mother, Ursula, on learning that her daughter's life has been saved.

In 1888 Gilbert at last supplied Sullivan with the libretto of 'human interest' that the composer had so long demanded of him. The result was *The Yeomen of the Guard*, which is perhaps best understood as the culminating work of the English school of opera represented by Balfe and Benedict. 'Were I thy Bride' is sung by the coquettish Phoebe Meryll to cover her movements as she steals the Tower keys from the dullard gaoler Wilfred Shadbolt as part of a plot to free the imprisoned Colonel Fairfax.

The Gondoliers (1889) was the last successful Gilbert and Sullivan collaboration. Shortly after the opening Gilbert perpetrated the famous 'carpet quarrel', attempting, among other things, to have the Savoy Theatre taken into receivership. 'Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes' is no doubt Sullivan's best known operetta song. In the 78rpm period only two pieces of his music were recorded more frequently: 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and 'The Lost Chord'. 'Kind Sir You Cannot Have the Heart' is sung by Gianetta on learning that she is to be separated from her husband of ten minutes, while 'On the Day when I was Wedded' is in the way of a patter song for the Duchess of Plaza-Toro.

While the carpet quarrel was raging, Sullivan was at work on his 'romantic' - not 'grand' - opera *Ivanhoe*. This work was produced for the first time on 31 January 1891 at the Royal English Opera House (now the Palace Theatre), which D' Oyly Carte had built specially for the purpose. The theatre failed because Carte, who had intended to found a new school of English opera, was unsuccessful in his efforts to provide further English works to succeed *Ivanhoe*. Sullivan's opera has been mistakenly blamed for what was actually a débâcle of management, and has now carried the stigma of failure for more than a century. In fact its first run of 155 performances was a critical and popular success; it was toured, performed in Berlin, revived by Beecham in 1910, and broadcast in 1929. Many of the songs became popular in their own right, including the three here presented: Friar Tuck's drinking song ('Ho, Jolly Jenkin'), the Templar's aria, in which he meditates on the rape of Rebecca ('Woo Thou Thy Snowflake') and the prayer of the imprisoned Rebecca ('Lord Of Our Chosen Race') in which Sullivan makes use of a phrase he had heard in the synagogue while a student in Leipzig.

Sullivan's last completed stage work was *The Rose of Persia*, presented at the Savoy in 1899. It ran for over 200 performances, was revived professionally in 1935, and has remained in the amateur repertory. The Drinking Song, 'I Care Not If The Cup I Hold', became a platform 'standard'. The tale of the Small Street Arab provides the denouement to the operetta as Hassan sings it to the Sultan, Arabian Nights fashion, to save his life.

STEPHEN TURNBULL

THE SINGERS

The performers represented on this record are as diverse as the music. A number actually worked with Sullivan; three even made 'creator' recordings. Most of the rest belong to a slightly later generation in which the music of Sullivan was still an essential part of the repertory of a leading British singer. The sound quality of the original discs is variable: the earliest were made in 1902 at a time when recording techniques were not well developed. By 1924, when Violet Essex and Harold Williams were recording, technical advances had been considerable.

DORA LABBETTE (1898 - 1984) studied at the Guildhall School of Music and with Lisa Lehmann. She began her recital and oratorio career under Beecham, specialising in English music, in particular that of Delius. Her operatic début did not take place until 1935, when she sang Mimi under the stage name of Lisa Perli. She proved a talented actress, noted for the purity of her voice.

EVAN WILLIAMS (1867 - 1918) was born and died in Ohio. He worked as a miner and in a steel mill before making his début at the Worcester (Massachusetts) Festival of 1896. He went on to pursue a successful career in oratorio and as a recitalist.

BEN DAVIES (1858 - 1943) was born at Pontardawe, near Swansea. He sang at the Eisteddodau before studying at the Royal Academy of Music under Randegger. He made his oratorio and opera début in 1881, creating the tenor lead in Alfred Cellier's *Dorothy* (1886) and the title part in Sul1ivan's *Ivanhoe* (1891). From the 1890s until his retirement in 1926 he concentrated increasingly on concert work and oratorio. He was a frequent visitor to America.

JOHN HARRISON (1872 - 1929) commenced his career as a baritone, later changing to tenor. He became a popular singer at Covent Garden, and made a wide variety of recordings between 1903 and 1919. Among these are complete sets of two of Sullivan' s works: *The Mikado* (1917) and *The Gondoliers* (1919).

*SIR CHARLES SANI'LEY (1834-1922) was the fourth member of the great Victorian quartet of Albani, Patey, Lloyd and Santley. He studied in Milan and London, making his début in *La Traviata* in Pavia in 1857. He sang Valentine in the first production of *Faust* in England - Gounod composed the aria 'Even bravest heart' expressly for him. Santley's association with Sullivan began in 1866, when he sang 'O Mistress Mine' under the composer in a concert at St. James's Hall. He took part in the first performances of *The Prodigal Son* (1869) and *The Light of the World* (1873). 'Thou'rt Passing Hence' was written for him in 1875. He was knighted in 1905 and made his farewell appearances at Covent Garden in 1911.

WALTER PASSMORE (1867 - 1946) first appeared at the Savoy Theatre in 1893, creating the role of Tarara in *Utopia Limited*. He played Peter Adolphus Grigg in *The Chieftain* (1894) and went on to create the title role in *The Grand Duke* (1896). He appeared in a number of Savoy revivals, and created leading roles in Sullivan's last three operettas: *The Beauty Stone* (1898), *The Rose of Persia* (1899) and *The Emerald Isle* (1901). He left the Savoy in 1903 and pursued a career in musical comedy.

ANDREW BLACK (1857 - 1920) was one of the greatest English interpreters of Mendelssohn's *Elijah.* Born in Glasgow, he became an organist, then studied under Randegger and in Milan. He made his London début at the Crystal Palace concerts in 1887 and came to prominence in Dvorák's *The Spectre's Bride* at the Leeds

Festival of 1892. The climax of his career was as Judas in *The Apostles* at Birmingham in 1903. He settled in Australia in 1913.

ROBERT RADFORD (1874 - 1933) was born in Nottingham. In 1896 he entered the Royal Academy of Music, studying under Frederick King, the bass soloist in the first performance of Sullivan's *Golden Legend* (Leeds 1886). Throughout his career Radford combined oratorio and festival work with his principal love, that of opera. An advocate of opera in English, he sang at Covent Garden and with the Beecham Company from 1910 to 1919. He was a founder director of the British National Opera Company and from 1928 was Professor of Singing at the Royal Academy of Music. His many recordings include six Sullivan operettas for HMV, and much other music by the composer.

*RICHARD TEMPLE (1847 - 1912) made his début at the Crystal Palace in 1872, and was selected by Sullivan and Gilbert to create the role of Sir Marmaduke in *The Sorcerer* (1877). In all Temple created roles in nine operettas. He left the Savoy for the music halls after the end of the run of *The Yeomen of the Guard*, but returned later to appear in revivals. He was semi-retired by the time he made four recordings in 1902-03. During the last years of his life he became a professor at the Royal College of Music, making his final stage appearances in the Savoy season of 1908-09.

ISABEL JAY (1879 - 1927) went straight into the D'Oyly Carte Company from studies at the Royal College of Music. She replaced Ellen Beach Yaw early in the run of *The Rose of Persia* (1899) and created the part of Lady Rose Pippin in *The Emerald Isle* (1901). After appearing in a number of Savoy revivals she moved in 1902 to a career in musical comedy, appearing in such works as *A Country Girl* (1902), *The Cingalee* (1904) and *My Mimosa Maid* (1908). She retired from the stage in 1911.

*EDWARD LLOYD (1845 - 1927) was the son of a Westminster Abbey singer who himself sang in the Abbey choir under James Turle. Finding himself a tenor (his voice never broke) he spent a term at Cambridge and was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1869 to 1871. His first public success came at the Gloucester Festival, and thereafter he became a leading Festival singer. He took part in the first performance of numerous works, including *The Martyr of Antioch* (1880) and *The Golden Legend* (1886). He retired at the height of his career in 1900, shortly after singing in the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. He made a number of recordings in retirement, and was persuaded to sing at the coronation of George V in 1911.

SIR HENRY LYTTON (1867 - 1936) joined the D'Oyly Carte organization in 1884 and remained (apart from some years spent in musical comedy) until 1934. He first came to prominence in 1887 when he stepped in as understudy to George Grossmith in *Ruddigore*. For Sullivan he created roles in *The Beauty Stone* (1898),

The Rose of Persia and also in *The Emerald Isle* (completed after Sullivan's death by Edward German). He also appeared in German's *Merrie England* (1902). He made a number of operetta and musical comedy recordings between 1902 and 1906, and between 1924 and 1932 took part in five G&S complete sets for HMV. His wife, LOUIE HENRI (1865 - 1947) was also a member of the D'Oyly Carte organization from 1884 to 1902. She was at the Savoy in *The Gondoliers* in 1898. HARRY DEARTH (1876 - 1933) trained at the Royal College of Music and in 1897 sang the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* at the Lyceum. He was for many years a vicar choral at Westminster Abbey, and he also pursued a concert and stage career. In Beecham's 1910 season he appeared in Sullivan's *Ivanhoe* and in Delius' *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. He recorded extensively for G&T, Odeon and Columbia.

HAROLD WILLIAMS (1893 - 1976) came to London from Australia at the suggestion of Clara Butt. He served in France during the first World War, afterwards settling in England. He joined the British National Opera Company, achieving fame as Iago and Tonio. In 1936 he appeared at Covent Garden as Boris, and in 1938 as Mephistopheles. As a platform singer he was best known as Elijah, the Angel of the Agony (*Gerontius*) and Hiawatha. In 1952 he returned to Australia as Professor of Singing at the New South Wales Conservatorium. He made many recordings for Columbia, including items from *The Mikado* and *The Gondoliers*.

CARRIE TUBB (1876 - 1976) studied at the Guildhall School of Music, and in later life was for almost thirty years a professor there. As an oratorio singer she was a popular favourite in *Elijah* and *The Golden Legend*. She sang in *Elektra* for Beecham in 1910, and regularly in Henry Wood's Queen's Hall promenade concerts. She retired from public performance in 1930.

EDNA THORNTON (1875 - 1964) studied with Santley and sang regularly at the major musical festivals. However her chief fame was as an operatic contralto. She sang in the Ring at Covent Garden, and was particularly associated with the later years of the Beecham Opera Company. She retired from performance in 1924.

ELEANOR JONES-HUDSON studied with Clara Novello and at the Royal College of Music. She had a long career in concert and oratorio, and in the period from 1905 to 1915 made a large number of recordings for the Gramophone Company under her own name and as Elvina Yarrow and Madame Deering. She married the flautist Eli Hudson, and with her husband's sister Winifred formed a trio which toured the music halls.

VIOLET ESSEX (1893 - ?1941), a Londoner, studied with Herman Klein among others. In 1912 she sang in *The Sunshine Girl* (Paul Rubens) at the Gaiety Theatre and four years later in *Chu Chin Chow* (Norton/Ashe). Like Eleanor Jones-Hudson she toured the music halls in the 1920s. She was in seven of the acoustically made G&S sets and was in a number of other recordings, mostly of musical comedy.

JOHN COATES (1865 - 1941), born in Yorkshire, began his career as a baritone; as such he joined the D'Oyly Carte organization in 1894, appearing in *Utopia Limited* in England and America. Convinced that he was a tenor, he changed the course of his career and was engaged to give the first performance of Sullivan' s *Absent-Minded Beggar* (1899) written with Rudyard Kipling to raise funds for the wives and families of servicemen during the Boer War. From this time he began to acquire fame as a tenor, becoming a festival and concert singer besides appearing with the Moody-Manners and Beecham opera companies. He served in the Yorkshire Regiment during World War I, afterwards taking up a career of solo recitals, especially of English songs, which became famous for his spoken introductions.

CARRIE HERWIN is remembered as a gramophone artist. She recorded a wide repertoire for Pathé in the early years of the century, and later for Columbia.

DAVID BISPHAM (1857 - 1921) was born in Philadelphia. He studied in Milan and London, making his operatic début in Messager's *La Basoche* at D'Oyly Carte's Royal English Opera House. His success both as singer and as actor led to a distinguished operatic career at Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera, New York. From 1902 onwards he devoted himself largely to song recitals and teaching, being an ardent advocate of the English language in opera and song. At the Leeds Festival of 1895 he sang in a performance of the great scene of confrontation between the Templar and Rebecca from Sullivan's *Ivanhoe*, with the composer conducting.

PETER DAWSON (1882 - 1961) was born in Adelaide and was originally destined for the family ironworking business. However his interest in music proved too great and he came to England in 1902, where he studied under Santley. He began to make cylinder recordings for Edison Bell in 1904, and although he pursued an extensive concert career, it is as one of the greatest of all recording artists that he is best remembered. He recorded a vast range of material under his own name and under a dozen pseudonyms, not finally retiring until 1956. His output includes six G&S operettas complete and a number of individual items. Like Eleanor Jones-Hudson he was a member of the team of Gramophone Company singers known as the Sullivan Operatic Party which recorded three operettas quasi-complete and excerpts from four others in 1906-08.

EDITH EVANS was a Welsh singer who appeared regularly at Covent Garden. She sang Rowena in the 1910 Beecham revival of *Ivanhoe*, although 'Lord of our Chosen Race', presented here, is sung by Rebecca.

WALTER GLYNNE, like so many tenors of Welsh origin, was briefly in 1915 a member of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. He was an established festival singer and a regular recording artist for HMV, singing in the chorus of a number of

acoustically recorded G&S sets from 1918 onwards. He sang as a principal in *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1923) and *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1928).

CHARLES HERBERT WORKMAN (1873 - 1923), a Lancastrian, joined a D'Oyly Carte touring company in 1894 and created the small role of Ben Hashbaz in *The Grand Duke* (1896). Thereafter he toured extensively and played ‘comedian’ parts in the Savoy repertory season of 1906 - 09. A venture into management, presenting Gilbert & German's *Fallen Fairies* (1909), proved a disaster. He emigrated to Australia in 1914.

*Denotes Creator Recording.

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